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# Editorial

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This is the final editorial for 2012 and also marks the end of our old format website. From next month (November 2012) the full Springer version of the journal will be launched. Among the many benefits, the new website allows a more efficient way for authors to submit articles and for editors to send them out for review. I want to take this opportunity to thank our current editorial board. In particular professor Fred Davidson, our Distinguished Editorial Advisor, whose guidance, careful reviews and behind the scenes help have been invaluable from the beginning until now. The staff at Springer are exceptional and Jolanda Voogd, the producing editor, brought everything together efficiently and on schedule. Helen van der Stelt, Sam Woodbridge, Bin Walters, Erwin Zamora, Kevin Francis and Michael Reffold are also richly deserving of thanks.

This year we had a total of 24 new articles published, all freely available online. In the first paper, adopting a mixed methodology and collecting data through questionnaires, observations, and interviews, Masoomah, Estaji and Tajeddin investigate the learner's perspectives on motivation, test-taking anxiety, test-taking strategies, and the expectations brought to the IELTS academic writing courses. The results show that learner perspectives' meaning and change from one time to another is not noticeably significant. Through

classroom observations, learners' viewpoints and practices are also found to be varied, with both positive and negative perspectives towards the exams. Interviews also explore a complex relationship between exam and learners' perspectives emphasizing different tasks and activities with varying behavioral patterns and perspectives.

The second paper, *Accountability and External Testing Agencies* by Edward Sarich, looks at the practices of the commonly used external testing agencies in Japan and discusses how greater accountability from those agencies would do much to not only improve test validity, but make them more useful for score users and test takers.

The review of research concerning reading comprehension by Steve Mckee explores the complex process of reading comprehension. Looking into research from 1995 to the present, the researcher discusses reading strategies, how they relate to reading comprehension, and reviews how it is measured. He then concludes the study by offering some suggestions for improvement of reading comprehension.

The fourth study, by Masood Siyyari, considers whether learners with enough training and practice have the potential to rate like those of expert-raters in terms of holistic and analytic intra-reliability. The self/peer-assessments are conducted among trained 136 English-major students and the results draw the analogy between the rating behaviors of learners: self- and peer-raters, and expert raters; with the intention to provide the learners with rating training and practice.

Next, the research by Hamed Ghaemi and Hossein Khodabakhshzadeh reports on the effect of audio/video conferencing as a modern speaking teaching technique on IELTS speaking performance in Tehran, Iran. The IELTS candidates, grouped into experimental and control, took the exam on November 2011. The study outcomes prove the significant difference between those two groups: candidates from the experimental group have outperformed those from the control group in IELTS speaking band scores.

Researchers Ghanbari, Hossein Barati and Ahmad Moinszadeh re-analyzed rating scales in writing assessment, attempting to remind us that besides the mainstream tradition of continually examining the evaluation procedures in language testing, a local rating scale considering the particularities of each assessment context could bring valid outcomes. In this regard, two lines of argument are discussed. First, the socio-cognitive framework of Weir (2005) looking at the importance of an appropriate selection of rating criteria and questioning the validity of any scale developed and devised on unknown grounds, and second, the critical argument concerning the validity of rating scales. The researchers end the study with the potential perspective of rating criteria by the local raters in writing assessment of Iranian EFL context.

In the study *Consistency of Measured Accuracy in Grammar Knowledge Tests and Writing: TOEFL*, Saeideh Ahangari and Ali Hamed Barghi examine the validity of a widely-used grammar test as an indicator of examinees' level of accuracy in writing by test users. The results show that an individual's demonstrable knowledge of certain language forms in a grammar

test cannot necessarily be generalized to their accuracy in writing and thus a certain score obtained even in a valid grammar knowledge test is not necessarily a valid indicator of an examinee's level of accuracy in written discourse.

The paper *Dynamic Assessment and the Impact on English Language Learners' Reading Comprehension Performance*, by Jila Naeini and Emily Duvall, focuses on studying improvements in English Language Training (ELT) university students' reading comprehension performance, by applying the mediations of a dynamic assessment approach to instruction and assessment. Through dynamic assessment procedures with 10 ELT university students, descriptive and analytic analyses of the results reveal measurable progress in participants' reading comprehension performance.

Next, Cynthia B. Leung and Alejandro E. Brice investigate the English phonological processes and speech articulation of adult Cantonese-English speakers residing in Hong Kong. Analyzing data from 37 adult participants, results indicated they display a wide variety of articulatory patterns, some of which were not evidenced by the literature, and the researchers also provide some instructional strategies focusing on speech production.

In the paper *Cognitive Styles on C-Test and Cloze-Elide Test: Which Style Acts Better?* Kamal Heidari Soureshjani attempts to explore any probable role of the cognitive style of language learners in their performance of two varieties of cloze test; that is, c-test and cloze-elide test. Findings show a significant difference between the cognitive style of learners and their performance

on the two intended tests, and with regard to c-tests, FI learners have a better performance in comparison to FDs.

Then, Parvane Nourbandegani addresses students' perception of the computerized TOEFL test. Comparing pros and cons of a Computer-Based Test (CBT) to a Paper-Based Test (PBT), the study points out that students perceived the disadvantages of CBT were greater than its advantages.

In *The Construct Validity of a Test: A Triangulation of Approaches*, Mohammad Salehi proposes three means of validation enquiry being applied on the data obtained from a proficiency test carried out with 3,398 PhD candidates as a partial requirement for entering a PhD program in Iran. He points out that the test has construct validity as revealed by these three approaches.

*Cognates in Vocabulary Size Testing – a Distorting Influence?*, by Eoin Jordan, observes the issue of cognates in frequency-based vocabulary size testing. The results point out a statistically significant difference between scores achieved on cognate and noncognate items. The author also suggests that cognate items may be easier for test-takers to respond to than noncognate ones of similar frequency, indicating the importance of ensuring that their respective proportions in tests are representative of those inherent in the frequency bands they have been sampled from.

In the next paper, investigating the attitudes of Iranian iBT candidates towards the TOEFL iBT test in Iran, Kamal Heidari Soureshjani, Parisa Riahipour and Arezoo Safikhani look at any meaningful relationship between

candidates' sex and their attitudes towards the test, analyzing through chi-square and T-test. They offer some implications useful for all the stakeholders including TOEFL iBT candidates, teachers, and institutes running an iBT preparation program.

In the study *A comparative study of composing processes in reading- and graph-based writing tasks*, Hui-Chun Yang compares EFL writers' processes in composing reading-based writing (RW) and graph-based writing (GW) tasks developed for a university English proficiency exam. It finds that both types of tasks require global comprehension of source texts as well as integrative manipulation of available information for writing and some differences across tasks and writers of varying score levels, with the RW tasks eliciting a more interactive and facilitative process than the GW tasks for the higher scoring writers.

The research *Hybrid modeling of intelligence and linguistic factors as predictors of L2 writing quality: A SEM approach*, by Reza Pishghadam and Mohammad Ali Shams, discusses some applications and implications of the findings for L2 writing pedagogy and assessment. Hongli Li, Qi Zhong and Hoi K. Suen look into the students' perceptions of the Impact of the College English test in China through a survey of 150 undergraduate students in Beijing. Their study also provides important evidence about how the test influences students' English learning in China and directions for further research.

In the paper *Washback Effects of the New English Assessment System on Secondary Schools in Bhutan*, collecting data from 56 EFL secondary school

teachers in Bhutan, Robert Kirkpatrick and Kinley Gyem find that the new curriculum produces both positive and negative washback and suggest some improvements.

Then the study *College Student Personality Traits Related to TOEIC and GEPT*, by Chia-Hui Lin from Japan, explores how TOEIC and GEPT tests do not influence personality traits, and suggests that GEPT participation has more statistical significance than TOEIC participation for student personality traits.

Zainab Abolfazli Khonbi and Karim Sadeghi in addition look into the effect of self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment on Iranian undergraduate EFL students' course achievement and reveal that peer-based scores are lower than self-based scores, which mean that peer-raters tend to under-grade while self-raters tend to over-grade.

*Rethinking Assessment of Thai EFL Learners' Speaking Skills*, by Kemtong Sinwongsuwat, attempts to reassess the mainstream tasks used for evaluating Thai ELF learners' speaking skills: face-to-face interview and role-play. It also examines the capacity of these two tasks to assess the learners' conversation skills in particular and recommends a task that is more oriented towards features of natural conversation; i.e., non-scripted role-play.

Venus Kansopon from Thailand studies the writing test used at the Institute of International Studies, Ramkhamhaeng University (IIS-RU) in Bangkok. She points out the validity and reliability of the writing assessments and their backwash effects on the undergraduates.

Next, the researchers Parviz Ajideh and Nava Nourdad examine the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' reading comprehension in different proficiency levels through quasi-experimental design, collecting data from 197 Iranian university students. Their findings state that while dynamic assessment had both immediate and delayed improving effects on the reading comprehension of learners in all proficiency levels, the proficiency groups do not differ significantly in their taking advantage of this kind of assessment.

Finally, in the paper *When Raters Talk, Rubrics Fall Silent*, Masoumeh Ahmadi Shirazi reports that raters, when involved in writing assessment, seem more concerned with their own criteria to set a basis for their judgment rather than the standards provided by scale descriptors. These findings background the utility of holistic rating scale descriptors, foregrounding the raters' descriptors-independent judgments.

Some authors have written with concerns over the extra costs involved in submitting articles from 2013. However more and more universities see the advantages of having academics submit to journals that allow free public access. And many now have arrangements with publishers like Springer that allow their faculty to submit without paying a personal fee. For the writers it has the strong advantages of rapid publication and more exposure for their ideas and I think it is likely that this model will be a dominant one in the future.